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# Exploited and Abused: North Korean Workers in Chinese Factories Face Harsh Realities

Investigations reveal the dire plight of North Korean workers in Chinese factories, enduring abuse and exploitation for economic gain.



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Exploited and Abused: North Korean Workers in Chinese Factories Face Harsh Realities

'If you show even the slightest attitude, they will treat you like an insect' - these harrowing words from a North Korean worker in China shed light on the plight of over a hundred thousand people sent to Chinese factories, enduring conditions akin to slave labor. Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Ian Urbina, director of the Outlaw Ocean Project, reveals the grim reality faced by these workers, including beatings, sexual abuse, and threats of death for those contemplating escape.

## Systematic Exploitation Under the Guise of Employment

Despite United Nations sanctions aimed at curbing the exploitation, Chinese companies continue to employ North Korean workers in dire conditions. Investigations point to Donggang Jinhui Food, among other firms, where mostly female North Korean workers are subjected to long hours, meager pay, and rampant sexual abuse. The North Korean government, in a disturbing twist, seizes a significant portion of their wages to fund its secretive Room 39 project, amassing foreign currency for party officials and sustaining its regime. In 2017, the UN estimated that this labor transfer program funneled between 1.2 and 2.3 billion dollars annually into North Korea's coffers.

## The Human Cost of Economic Gain

The conditions described by North Korean workers in China are harrowing. They report being treated as less than human, with any sign of dissatisfaction or defiance met with severe punishments. The psychological and physical toll on these workers is immense, with many suffering from long-term trauma and injuries due to the abuse. The international community has raised concerns, but the complex geopolitical and economic ties between China and North Korea make it challenging to intervene effectively.

## Voices from the Shadows

Despite the risks, some North Korean workers have bravely come forward to share their experiences, hoping to shed light on the atrocities occurring within these Chinese factories. Their testimonies, supported by investigations from journalists and human rights organizations, paint a grim picture of exploitation and abuse. These revelations have sparked a global discourse on the ethics of labor practices and the responsibility of the international community to protect vulnerable workers from such exploitation.

The stories of North Korean workers in Chinese factories are a stark reminder of the human cost behind some of the products that reach global markets. As consumers and global citizens, there is a growing call to question and challenge the conditions under which goods are produced, pushing for transparency, accountability, and, most importantly, humanity in labor practices. The courage of these workers, despite the immense risks, offers a glimmer of hope for change and a future where labor rights are respected universally.

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